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Mothers Operate Nursery School

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Mothers own the school and assist teachers while their children play at Kaywood Gardens Cooperative Nursery.

Mothers Operate Nursery School

Carol Brueck Best, '37, describes the operation of a new cooperative nursery school.

AN avalanche of telephone calls greeted the director of the Kaywood Gardens Cooperative Nursery School, Washington, D. C., one Monday morning after a description of the school had appeared in the Washington Post society section. Those who kept the wire hot were eager mothers with questions like this: "Could you put my child on your waiting list right away?" "How should I go about helping to start a cooperative nursery in my community?"

Forward-looking mothers such as these who telephoned us are grasping this recent nursery education movement as their opportunity to give their pre-school boys and girls experience playing and learning in surroundings scaled to their capacities and interests. More than that, the cooperative nursery school gives groups of open-minded mothers a chance to get together and learn the trained nursery school teacher's techniques. They can also keep up with current literature on child psychology and family relations.

A cooperative nursery school, of course, is not a place to "park the children" while you go to the office, as were the publicized wartime nurseries. Rather, it's a place where mothers "go to school" with their children and where good nursery school education is provided at a minimum cost.

This nursery school, like many others, had to be started with a minimum of equipment. It was developed to its present high standard through the hard work of cooperating teachers and mothers. The direc-

tor of the Kaywood Gardens Cooperative Nursery School, Mrs. Virginia Lee Saari, and her assisting teacher, Mrs. Hester A. McNary, were among those who gave unlimited time and energy to make it among the best in the Washington area. It had its first sessions in a public school building. Finally through the generosity of the owner of Kaywood Gardens a suitable four-room apartment and space for a private playground were obtained, all rent free.

JUST how does your school function?" "Where does the management of the mothers end and the work of the trained director begin?" These are questions asked by parents patterning a school after ours.

Our director, Mrs. Saari, is in entire charge of the educational program. She determines the 9:30-12:30 schedule, recommends equipment and establishes the principles by which the mothers are guided when they are assistant teachers.

The mothers are the owners of the school, which is non-profit, and are responsible for its physical upkeep. Besides assisting the teachers one day out of each 10 school days, each mother is on a working committee. All members attend monthly business meetings unless valid written excuses are handed in. Attendance is required also at study group sessions, and fathers are urged to take part in these. Fathers also build and repair equipment. Most important factor in enrolling a child in the school is the mother's suitability, willingness and interest in the project.

A registered nurse is always in attendance. The children's health is otherwise guarded by medical examinations and inoculations upon entering, as well as by chest X-rays for mothers.